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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

State Department review
completed

Information as of 1600
13 October 1966

NSA review completed

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HIGHLIGHTS

Communications intelligence indicates that the North Vietnamese 630th Division headquarters has moved north from its Chu Pong Mountain redoubt and that the division is assuming a posture which suggests it is ready for offensive operations.

I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:

No recent major ground engagements have been reported in South Vietnam; however, US and ARVN forces continued to encounter determined enemy resistance near the Demilitarized Zone in northernmost Quang Tri Province (Paras. 1-3). There are indications in SIGINT that the focal point of the North Vietnamese Army's 630th Division activities may have shifted northward from the Chu Pong Mountain area of southwestern Pleiku Province to southwestern Kontum Province (Paras. 4-6).

II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:

The southern cabinet - northern military dispute appears to be suspended until after the Manila Conference, but the underlying antipathies suggest that there will be more trouble in the future (Paras. 1-7).

III. Military Developments in North Vietnam: Intercepted communications indicate that North Vietnam may be getting six additional Shanghai-class fast patrol boats from Communist China (Para. 1). North Vietnam's new naval command post is approaching operational status (Paras. 2-3).

IV. Other Communist Military Developments: There is nothing of significance to report.

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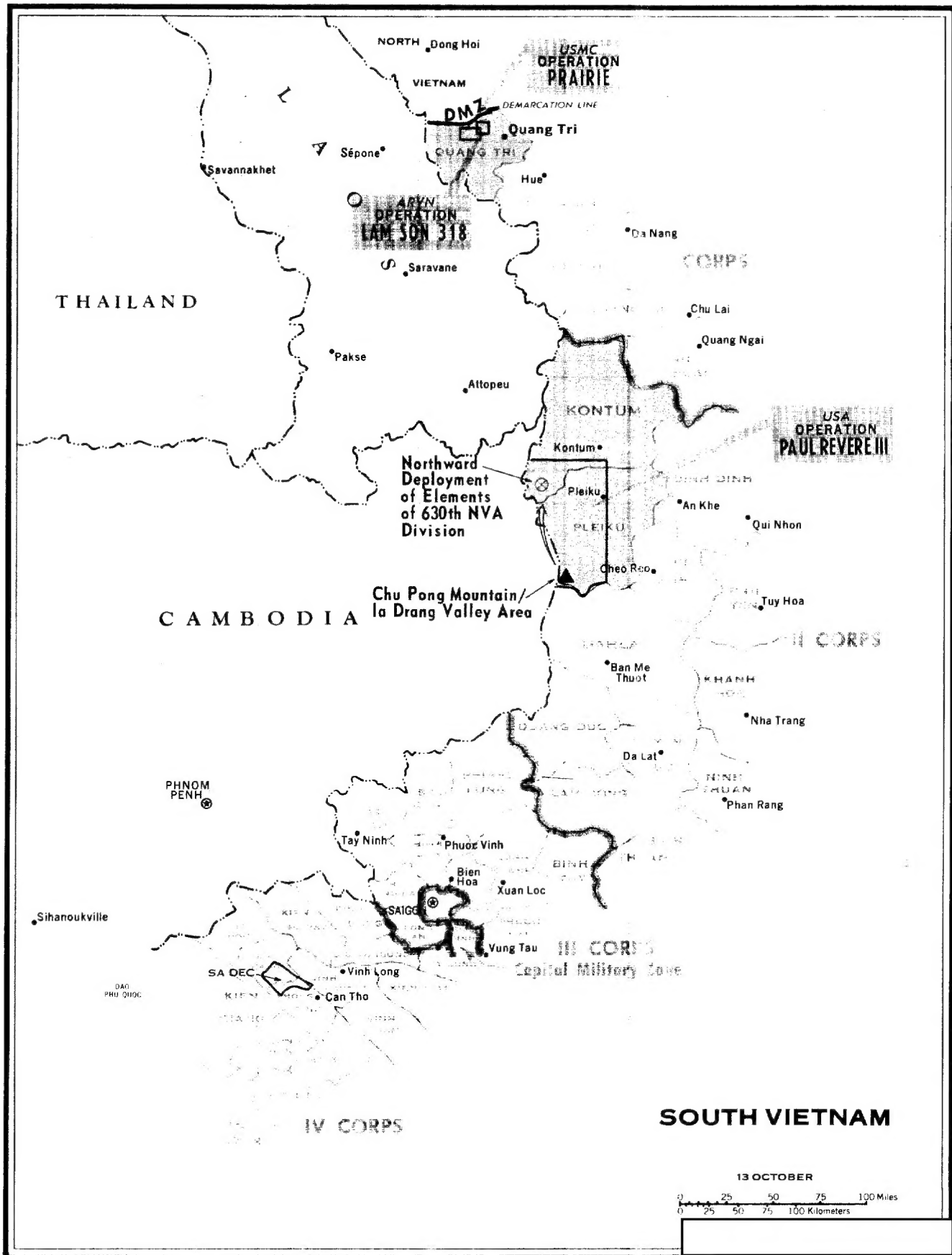
[REDACTED] Soviet
Premier Kosygin attacked China on 13 October for
failing to join in united action on Vietnam (Para.
7). A Liberation Front central committee member
has been killed in South Vietnam, according to a
Hanoi broadcast. (Paras. 8-9).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. US combat forces are participating in 10 of the 28 battalion-size or larger allied search-and-destroy operations currently in progress. No recent major contact has been reported in any of these operations.

2. In Operation PRAIRIE, elements of one US Marine battalion, supported by a tank platoon and artillery, engaged a Communist force of undetermined size on 12 October about 23 miles northwest of Quang Tri city. In the ensuing firefight, one marine was killed, six wounded, and two tanks were disabled; enemy losses were not reported. Contact was later re-established with an estimated North Vietnamese Army platoon in the same general area. Two marines were killed and 17 wounded in this encounter, as against known enemy losses of three killed.

3. Meanwhile, on the right flank of US Marine Operation PRAIRIE, an ARVN battalion participating in Operation LAM SON 318 was shelled on 12 October by an estimated 20 rounds of enemy 60-mm. mortar fire. The action, centered about 15 miles northwest of Quang Tri City, resulted in friendly casualties of four killed and 30 wounded (two US).

Northward Deployment by Elements of 630th NVA Division

4. The movement of a headquarters element of the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) 630th Division into Kontum Province, coupled with recent SIGINT locations on a number of unidentified enemy military radio stations in the southwestern Kontum - northwestern Pleiku Province area, suggests that the focal point of the 630th Division's activities may have moved northward from the Chu Pong Mountain area. Prior to 9 September, the 630th Front Headquarters and its forward elements had been operating jointly in the Ia Drang Valley area of southwestern Pleiku Province. On 9 September, however, a communications link appeared

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. Premier Ky appears to have convinced the six dissident southern ministers not to leave their posts in the cabinet for the time being. The underlying causes of the dissension still largely exist, however, and a showdown may develop after the Manila Conference, according to the US Embassy. Ky, Chief of State Thieu, and other influential government functionaries have been trying to calm the opposing parties in the dispute by hosting dinners during which they have been able to vent their ire.

2. According to the US Embassy, the resigning ministers are determined to force police director Nguyen Ngoc Loan out of the government. Ky has reportedly shown his willingness to make some concessions to the group, but has given no indication that he would relieve Loan. Youth Minister Trieu, one of the six southern ministers, told an embassy officer that he would retain his post until at least mid-November unless there were other incidents of abuse in the meantime. He thought he could convince the other five ministers to follow suit.

3. The differences of opinion between the southern ministers and their northern antagonists have been blamed on traditional regional rivalries. The crux of the disturbance within that inherent problem is the southerners' belief that certain northern militarists and their supporters are increasingly misusing their power. The principal antagonist in the dispute is General Loan. Loan's authority and responsibility have been on the rise, especially following his successful role in putting down the Buddhist-led antigovernment dissidence in I Corps and Saigon last spring.

4. Loan and his brother-in-law, Van Van Cua, the mayor of Saigon, have aroused the ire of the southerners by their reported intimidation of sub-cabinet and administrative persons in the government

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and by their manipulation of the press. Several antisouthern pamphlets have appeared in Saigon lately which are believed to have originated with Loan and to have been distributed through the Military Security Service (MSS), which he also heads. Loan has also attempted to place his MSS confidants strategically in the National Police in order to enhance his control over the internal security organs.

5. Loan is linked with the "Baby Turks," a group of young military officers who are opposed to civilianizing the government and to making further concessions to antigovernment groups. Several other northern military officers in the government are probably in sympathy with Loan, notably Minister of Information Nguyen Bao Tri and III Corps commander Le Nguyen Khang.

6. Ky has been trying to offset southern dissatisfaction by according the southerners more influence in the government. Southerners gained some ground when Ky reorganized his cabinet early last July. In spite of these concessions, influential northerners have maintained an upper hand in the government. Southern pressures, however, have been increasingly augmented by General Dang Van Quang, the IV Corps commander, who has reportedly tried on occasion to discredit Premier Ky. Nguyen Huu Co, the southern defense minister, has also been accused of attempting to maneuver Ky out of the government.

7. Most of the criticism of Loan in the present dispute has come from Vo Long Trieu, the minister of youth, who, like Loan, is a good friend of Ky. This increases the difficulty Ky faces in balancing opposing forces.

[REDACTED] Trieu is being backed by the other five ministers in the "resignation" group and by Au Truong Thanh, the economy

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minister, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Nguyen Luu Vien, the civilian deputy premier and a member of the Directorate, is backing Trieu because of traditional southern sympathy. Trieu's most ardent advocate, however, is Tran Van Van, the chairman of the Peoples-Army Council, and a leading deputy on the Constituent Assembly.

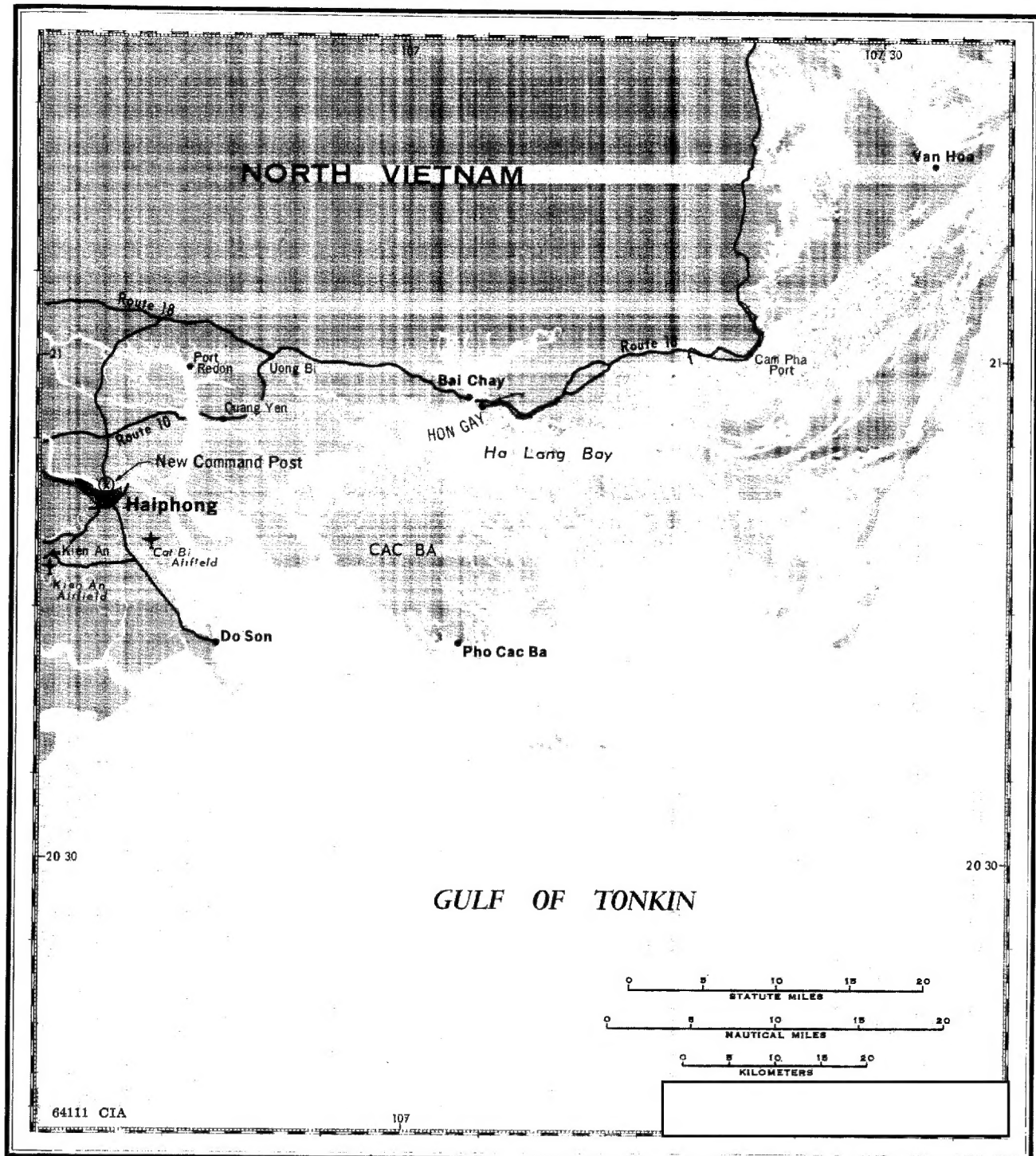
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North Vietnamese Naval Bases



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III. MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH VIETNAM

1. The North Vietnamese naval command post at Bai Chay sent a message to one of its units on 11 October containing a reference to picking up six 100-ton ships in Communist China. The type of ships involved were not specified, but it is possible that the DRV is receiving replacements for its hard-hit fleet of patrol and motor torpedo boats. The ships, which may be on their way to North Vietnam, could be small transport vessels or perhaps six of the seven Swatow-class motor gunboats believed to be undergoing repairs in Chinese shipyards. A more likely possibility, however, is that the ships are Shanghai-class fast patrol boats--the only ship in the current DRV naval order of battle with a displacement of 100 tons. North Vietnam now has four Shanghais, and a captured DRV naval officer stated in July 1966 that Communist China had promised to supply an additional eight vessels of this class.

New Naval Command Post Nears Completion

2. On 3 October 1966 the port commander in Haiphong reported to the naval command post at Bai Chay that construction was under way for a new command post at Binh Dong. The site for the new headquarters is located at a pier complex on the north side of the Cua Cam River opposite Haiphong. It has previously been associated with the "Group 125" sea infiltration authority. It is possible that, with the general withdrawal of North Vietnamese naval units into the port of Haiphong in mid-August, the DRV Navy has elected to abandon its forward operating bases at Bai Chay and Pho Cac Ba in favor of a consolidated command based at Haiphong.

3. In the ten days since the construction of the new post began, various messages have been intercepted dealing with problems of construction, supply, personnel, and communications. On 9 October, Haiphong

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between the Front headquarters and its forward elements, indicating that a separation had occurred. By 16 September, one of the elements was observed deploying to the extreme southwestern portion of Kontum Province near the Pleiku-Cambodian border.

5. There are as yet no firm indications in SIGINT as to whether all of the Front's approximately 40 radio substations have been involved in the northward deployment. Deployments of this magnitude accompanied by a clustering of military communications terminals, have in the past preceded offensive operations by elements of the 630th Division.

6. Allied forces immediately available to counter a major offensive thrust by elements of the 630th Division in the southwestern Kontum Province area include four battalions of the US 25th Infantry Division and one battalion of the US 4th Infantry Division. These units are currently participating in Phase III of long-term Cambodian border surveillance Operation PAUL REVERE.

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notified Bai Chay that the headquarters was nearing completion and Bai Chay responded by stating that its operations department political officer and two watch officers would arrive in Haiphong on the 19th. A subsequent message on 12 October indicated that the new facility would be complete on the 17th.

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IV. OTHER COMMUNIST MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS

1. There is nothing of significance to report.

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Kosygin Attacks Chinese

7. Moscow's recent propaganda crescendo against Communist China has focused even more sharply on Peking's refusal to join in common action against the US in Vietnam. The Soviet leaders clearly find Peking vulnerable on this issue, and the USSR has been able to exploit China's obstructionist stand to good effect among foreign Communist parties. Even the North Koreans have castigated China for its stubborn refusal to cooperate in the defense of North Vietnam. Soviet Premier Kosygin chose this line of attack in a 13 October speech in which he, in effect, blamed China for continued "US aggression" in Vietnam. He contended that, if China had only agreed to a joint rebuff to US actions there, "a quick end would have been put to US outrages."

Liberation Front Leader Dies

8. The Liberation News Agency has announced the death of another Front central committee member, Vu Tung. The VC announced last August that Buddhist leader Thom Me The Nhom was killed in July by "American bullets." According to a 12 October broadcast from Hanoi, Vu Tung was killed in a US bombing raid near Saigon on 20 September. This is the first public acknowledgment of an earlier defector report that two central committee members had been killed in bombing raids in January--Vu Tung and Tran Huu Trang. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] He turned himself in last March and reported that Vu Tung had been killed in a B-52 strike near the capital in January.

9. Vu Tung was also in propaganda work--a journalist by profession and the editor of the VC newspaper for the Saigon - Gia Dinh area. If the defector's version of the details of Vu Tung's death are correct, the public announcement was delayed for nine months and has fudged the details. There have been no reports to either deny or confirm the death of Tran Huu Trang.

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